Teen And Up Audiences

No Archive Warnings Apply

Other

ULTRAKILL (Video Game)

Gabriel & V1 (ULTRAKILL)
Gabriel/V1 (ULTRAKILL)

Gabriel (ULTRAKILL)
V1 (ULTRAKILL)

Angels is bugs
Gabriel molts
Crack Treated Seriously
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Passing the Mantle

LuxLightly

Summary:

Gabriel molts like some kind of bug or perhaps shrimp. Prequel to my other fic "6 dollar srimp special"

Notes:

mantle
/măn′tl/

noun

A loose sleeveless coat worn over outer garments; a cloak.

Something that covers, envelops, or conceals.

The role or appearance of an authoritative or important person.

(See the end of the work for more notes (#work_endnotes) .)

It had been so long, he completely missed the signs when they started to appear.

It began like a paranoia. Which, in his defense, felt like a very reasonable emotional state given everything that had happened, recently.

He'd wanted to hole himself up somewhere safe and stay there until all danger had passed, the desire increasing to an almost constant state of hyper awareness over the course of a week.

Then he started slowing down. He felt tired. Listless. All he wanted to do was lie down and sleep.

He'd written it off as depression. It wasn't like he hadn't been feeling enough of that lately, anyway.

The way his armor's normal luster dulled, the way his steps and movement felt stiff. The creaking of joints and the way it felt like he was suffocating in his own skin, like he was being crushed, trapped within himself.

Well…how else could one expect a fallen angel, forsaken by God, to feel?

In retrospect, it was embarrassingly obvious. But, at the time, it was all just as confusing and upsetting as everything else happening to Gabriel.

Finally, it was agitation and a desire to be alone. That's what finally tipped things over the edge.

He'd been traveling with the Machine for a while, by that point. Safety in numbers. At least, he had to figure that that was why the Machine stuck around him.

It didn't have an aching, empty hole of loneliness in its chest that threatened to overcome it with despair whenever it went too long without some kind of company, after all.

Unlike Gabriel.

They'd been in a fight with some of the denizens of Hell. Not even a difficult fight. Mostly just filth with a few more formidable enemies the two of them had dispatched hundreds of by this point. Barely could be considered a real fight. It served more to feed V1's blood hunger than anything.

And so it had been proceeding as normal, Justice and Splendor slicing through a wave of filth when, mid swing, the armor of his right arm let out a loud 'CRACK' and he was suddenly unable to move it further. His sword fell from his fingers and clattered to the ground.

Panic gripped him and he froze. The filth took advantage of his lapse and swarmed over him, toppling him over onto his back.

Teeth crunched against his armor, pulling and tearing at him, digging into his flesh. He needed to move, to summon light construct weapons or lash out with his other sword or manifest his wings or do *something!*

But he couldn't move. Panic he couldn't understand the source of had all but turned him to a statue. He felt like he was suffocating. Why was it so hard to breathe? Oh God, is this how he was going to die?

A bright blue pulse of light tore through the bulk of the filth, reducing them to nothing but gore. A quick series of precise headshots dispatched the rest and, at last, Gabriel was released from his terrified stupor.

He quickly got to his feet and retrieved his sword, then turned to see the Machine twirling its pistol in one hand, tilting its head in that dog-like way it did when it was confused.

It nodded towards the pile of bloody pulp that remained of the filth.

Gabriel's panic was quickly replaced with embarrassment and subsequent annoyance.

How far he'd fallen! Gabriel, the Archangel! The Judge of Hell and the Hand of God! Nearly felled by the lowest, most pathetic of damned souls, needing to be rescued by a machine.

He was not normally a man who was quick to anger, but leave it to that damned Machine to drag it out of him.

"Never you mind!" he snapped. "I just--"

He didn't know how to finish the thought. What *had* happened?

Confusion just turned to more annoyance and suddenly the idea of being anywhere near the Machine or any other creature made his skin crawl and anger flare in his stomach.

“I don't need your judgment! Just because you were able to beat me doesn't mean I'm helpless! Don't you dare look down on me!” he spat.

V1 seemed taken aback at his response. It held up its hands in a placating gesture.

It tilted its head again and took a step towards Gabriel.

Gabriel stiffened and tried to take a step backwards but another crack sounded from his leg and his knee buckled, nearly sending him to the ground again.

V1 jumped in alarm and apparent concern, running to him to try to identify the cause of his distress.

The sudden approach and closeness of another living thing made panic catch Gabriel in a sudden vice grip.

“DON'T TOUCH ME!” he all but shrieked.

White armor turned a dull, rusty red and, before he could even think through the action, Gabriel manifested his wings and shot up from the ground, away from V1.

He took off in a random direction, no destination in mind, only a desire to get away. To be alone. He just needed some space to himself for one Goddamn minute!

By the time he landed, his anger had burned out and his armor returned to a lackluster gray.

He trudged forward, breathing heavily. He couldn't seem to get a full breath. The walls seemed to be closing in around him and his skin felt like it was crawling.

What the hell was happening to him? Was he dying? Had his severing from the Father's Light finally caught up with him?

He sucked in a breath and swallowed it.

Huh?

The action repeated again, then again, and he found he couldn't stop himself.

What the hell? If he didn't know better he'd think he was--

No. It couldn't be. After so many centuries it couldn't be. And there would have been signs--

By the Father, he was an idiot.

Gabriel's legs locked up and he fell to his knees, the compulsive gulping of air continuing.

No, no, no, no!

He could *not* be molting now! Not here! He was totally exposed! He needed to move, to get himself somewhere safe!

He had to move. He had to get to his feet.

He fought against his back’s compulsion to curve forward and forced his stiffening legs to move, struggling to his feet.

No sooner had he gotten upright, however, when his legs bent against his will and sent him back to the ground. He curled down, arms hugging his knees, unable to fight the motion.

How body went still, his old exoskeleton stiffening completely around him. He could no longer move it an inch. He would have to break out of it if he wanted to be free.

Oh God, this was really happening. He was molting in some Godforsaken corner of hell, completely vulnerable to any demon, husk, or machine that happened by.

He tried not to panic, focusing on gulping down air to expand his body and crack through his old armor. Each breath grew more difficult as his new flesh detached from the old completely.

His vision dimmed and his breaths shallowed until he was trapped in a pitch black void, without light or air.

He tried to push his back upwards, but his old armor didn't yield an inch.

That wasn't right. By now it should have split at least enough for him to start working the crack open wider.

But…it had been so long. This armor had grown so thick through the years and his body had grown so unused to breaking it down from within. It wasn't weakened enough. He couldn't break out.

He was stuck.

Oh God…what a farce. What a pathetic, pitiful display. What a fittingly disgraceful end for a disgraced angel.

Trapped and suffocating within the shell of who he'd once been.

Helpless to escape his former mantle.

Maybe it was fitting, then. Maybe it was better to accept the fate of things that live past their time, to perish within themselves and be consumed by those who still had fight left in them.

He'd be a welcome surprise meal for any machine that happened by, he was sure.

The grim mental image made his mind turn to V1.

Would it wonder what had happened to him? Would it look for him? What would it think when its one constant source of blood vanished? Would it think he abandoned it to die? All because it had tried to show him some compassion?

Would it feel that same empty feeling in its chest where once was the company of one it held dear?

Did it already?

Gabriel had never really thought about what the Machine might have left behind when it was driven to Hell by its thirst for blood. If it had ever had a time when it had people or things it cared for.

Now, in the depths of this damned place, it could have no constants in its life, nothing but enemies and sources of fuel.

…and Gabriel.

What a farce, indeed.

Indignation flared in Gabriel's chest.

What a farce, indeed! For an Archangel to even consider such a pitiful demise! To give up at the first obstacle! To even consider being felled by such a trivial thing!

He would not allow it!

Gabriel focused on being aware of his body, on the space between his old and new skin.

If he could just pinpoint the spot…

He called forth his wings, forming them tight against his new skin on his back.

Gold and blue light tore open the back of his old shell as his wings extended, flaring outwards.

His new skin swelled up into the sudden extra space, forcing the shell farther apart and Gabriel found he could once again feel his arms and legs.

Pulling his hands backwards and away from his shed, he summoned light constructs of his swords, swinging them outwards while at the same time forcing himself to his feet, shredding the old skin on a single motion, sending chunks raining down all around him.

The thrill of accomplishment from his escape almost instantly turned to panic.

Callow! Teneral! Soft! Weak! Exposed exposed exposed! Unsafe!

Instinct gripped Gabriel completely. He was out in the open! He needed to hide! Unsafe! Unsafe!

Frantically kicking off the last bits of old skin, Gabriel grabbed his swords and once again took to the air, searching desperately for any hole or crevice large enough to hide him.

He found his sanctuary in the form of a hidden outcropping on a high wall. He had to dispose of a conspicuous glowing blue orb that had drawn his eye to the place but, without the obnoxious glow, it was perfectly concealed.

He pressed himself into the farthest corner, wincing at the feeling of the rough wall against his sensitive new flesh, and compulsively gulped down more air, holding a sword in front of him at the ready.

An hour passed this way, with trembling fingers grasping a sword, heart hammering in his chest while every instinct screamed at him for letting himself be so vulnerable like this.

Finally, the panic and dread began to release him and fade into a more reasonable anxiety. He *was* still weakened like this. While his hiding place was good, it was far from perfect and even a passing group of drones could pose a real threat to him like this.

But there was something that had come to be more synonymous with safety to him than even four study walls or the sharpness of his swords.

Calling his wings to him again, Gabriel set off in search of the Machine.

Notes:

I did not expect to write another of these but the concept of angels is bugs is a fertile garden for ideas.
Nothing spicy this time.

When and where does this happen? Not important.

Title is in reference to the term "to pass the mantle" which means to pass on a position to someone else or the accepting of a new role". There's also a Bible story about it.

Do you get it because a mantle is a covering or shell but also an important role and he is trapped in his old mantle I'm so smart and good at words you guys you have no idea

Written in one, two hour sitting at 1am. No beta. No editing. You know how it is. Bone app the teeth.

Series this work belongs to:

- ← Previous Work (http://archiveofourown.org/works/53233813) Part 2 of Angels is Bugs (http://archiveofourown.org/series/3953374) Next Work → (http://archiveofourown.org/works/53595460)

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